

LOUDOUN COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

AGENDA

**Wednesday, June 30, 2010
2:00 PM to 5:00 PM
Purcellville Room**

**Planning Commission Sub-Committee Meeting—ZOAM 2009-0003
Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, Sign Regulations**

- I. Discussion item: Department of Economic Development's role in assisting and retaining small businesses (Robyn Bailey)
- II. Discussion item: Additional questions/assumptions on basic issues to guide future discussion on the draft text and matrix (Attachment 1)
- III. Discussion item: Article 8, Definitions (Attachment 2)
- IV. Discussion item: Meeting dates/times for the week of July 12

ATTACHMENT 1

Additional questions/assumptions on basic issues to guide future discussion on the draft text and matrix:

1. Can Sign Plans (or whatever title needs to be used to distinguish from approved sign packages) be administrative, with some degree of flexibility (not bonus) built in but with maximum parameters? An example is the choice of awning, blade, or window sign with an aggregate square footage, such as was approved for the Lansdowne Village. Is an administrative process the vehicle to encompass the types of signs that are routinely being approved in the current system of sign packages, such as directional signs, the question of logo use, the scale of sign to building, the number and variety of tenant signs and others?
2. If sign plans become administrative, should there be a legislative process that permits a.) signs not permitted in the ordinance, or b.) modification of signs permitted. Would it be by minor special exception or special exception?
3. Should Sign Plans apply to commercial sites only, including mixed use districts that have commercial? Can they apply to a single commercial use within a larger site? Do several signs on one building constitute a "plan"?
4. Sign area: Should the background count or not?

ARTICLE 8 DEFINITIONS

Words and terms set forth below shall have the meanings ascribed to them. Any word, term, or phrase used in this Ordinance not defined below shall have the meaning ascribed to such word, term or phrase in the most recent edition of Webster's Unabridged Dictionary, unless in the opinion of the Zoning Administrator, established customs or practices in Loudoun County, Virginia justify a different or additional meaning. For the purpose of this Ordinance, certain words and terms are herein defined as follows:

Current Definition:

Sign: Any device for visual communication which is used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the attention of the public, but not including when standing alone, a flag, emblem, badge, or insignia of any governmental unit.

SOVWG Proposal:

Sign: Any exterior device for visual display that communication which is comprised of letters, words, numerals, figures, logos, trademarks, emblems, devices, or pictures, or any combination thereof, that is intended to identify, advertise, or otherwise make known to the general public the following: the property, individual businesses, products, services, and entertainment. A sign shall not be considered a Use for purposes of the Sign Regulations. By their very nature, architectural features that are unique to the design of a building or structure shall not be considered a sign. Such architectural features shall include, but are not limited to the following: cupolas, domes, spires, bell towers, canopies, awnings, columns, specialty façade treatments, parapet walls, colors, and specialty lighting used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the attention of the public, but not including when standing alone, a flag, emblem, badge, or insignia of any governmental unit.

Staff Discussion: Staff does not agree with adding the word “exterior.” By definition, a store window or display sign is interior. Further, interior signs are currently regulated and this change would seem to negate the regulation of all interior signs.

Staff does not agree with stating that a sign is not a Use. Signs are accessory uses, subordinate to the structures and land use functions they reference. Revisions should be made to the Sign Requirements Matrix and Section 5-1202(B), not the definition, to address concerns regarding the ability to modify provisions of the Sign Matrix.

Staff does not agree with adding typical architectural features within the definition of sign. A Planners Dictionary (American Planning Association, *A Planners Dictionary*, Planning Advisory Service Report No. 5xx, 2004) provides this definition for “architectural feature” from Lake Elsinore, California: “A part, portion, or projection that contributes to the beauty or elegance of a building or structure, exclusive of signs, that is not necessary for the structural integrity of the building or structure or to make said building or structure habitable.” While they may complement or be used in conjunction with architectural features, signs themselves are not architectural features.

Staff suggests the existing exclusion afforded to governmental flags, etc. be retained.

Staff Alternate Definition:

Sign: Any ~~device for visual display comprised of letters, words, numerals, figures, logos, trademarks, emblems, devices, or illustrations, or any combination thereof, communication which is used for the purpose of bringing the subject thereof to the directs attention of the public to identifies a property, business, product, service, person, or entertainment,~~ but not including when standing alone, a flag, emblem, badge, or insignia of any governmental unit.

SOVWG Proposal (New Definition):

Sign, Above Roofline: A sign may be permitted above the roofline of a building no more than one-half the height of the sign area. For purposes of this definition, roofline shall be the top of a building on a flat roof and [the]¹ gutter-line or eave of a gabled roof. (Add graphic to appropriate section; add to matrix)

Staff Discussion: Historically, “roofline” has been interpreted to mean the interior roofline of a building. Signs above the roofline are currently permitted only if modified through a Comprehensive Sign Plan. Since the Matrix refers to “roofline” as the maximum height of many sign categories, staff believes that clarification is needed in the Sign Requirements Matrix. Staff suggests amendment to note 3 as follows: *For the purpose of locating building mounted signs, no part of the sign shall extend above or beyond the perimeter of the screening wall to which it is attached. No screening wall shall be constructed for the sole purpose of sign placement.*

Current Definition:

Sign, Area of: The area of a sign shall be determined from its outside measurements, including any wall work incidental to its decoration, excluding the area of the sign supports, unless such supports are used to attract attention. In the case of a ground mounted sign utilizing the bonus multiplier for the background structure, the permitted increase in area of the background structure is not counted as the area of the sign. In the case of a sign where lettering appears back to back, that is, on opposite sides of a sign, the area of the sign will be considered that of only one side. In the case of a sign made up of individual letters, figures, words, or designs, the spaces between the same shall be included.

SOVWG Proposal:

Sign, Area of: The area comprised of the advertising elements of any display, such as letters, words, numerals, figures, logos, trademarks, emblems, devices, or pictures[,] or any combination thereof, that satisfies the definition of a sign as described herein. The area of a sign shall be measured as outlined in this ordinance, but shall not include the area of ~~determined from its outside measurements, including any wall work incidental to its decoration, awnings, canopies, glass, or any other structure to which the sign is attached excluding the area of the sign supports, unless such supports are used to attract attention. In the case of a ground mounted sign utilizing the bonus multiplier for the background structure, the permitted increase in area of the background structure is not counted as the area of the sign. In the case of a sign where lettering appears back to back, that is, on opposite sides of a sign, the area of the sign will be~~

¹ [] Text within brackets indicates grammatical edit made by staff.

ATTACHMENT 2

~~considered that of only one side. In the case of a sign made up of individual letters, figures, words, or designs, the spaces between the same shall be included.~~

Staff Discussion: The Sub-Committee is considering as a basic issue whether the background structure/area should be counted toward the area of the sign. Staff suggest that some parameter be placed on the area of the background structure, if such area is not counted toward the area of a sign. Staff can offer more specific text recommendations at an upcoming meeting.